



For Immediate Release

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Talbot County Government to Hold Ceremony to Commemorate 9/11

There have been certain times in history when events have unfolded both within our country and around the world which have left indelible memories for all of us. Most of us can recall what unfolded on September 11, 2001 and can give a minute by minute account of where we were and what we were doing that day. New members of the Talbot County Council, Pete Lesher and Frank Divilio, wanted to share their remembrances of September 11, 2001, as we prepare to observe the commemorative ceremony this year.

Pete Lesher recalls, "I was running a few minutes late to an all-staff meeting at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum at 9:00 on September 11, 2001. I thought I caught a brief mention on the radio about an aircraft hitting the World Trade Center just moments before I turned off the car and ran into the meeting. Distracted by the business of the moment, the radio report did not register with me until later." He adds, "As the meeting was wrapping up, someone else received word of two airplanes striking the World Trade Center and speculation that it could be the work of terrorists. Stunned, a group of us retreated to a colleague's nearby apartment for access to a television. By the time we tuned in, the South Tower had already collapsed, another aircraft had struck the Pentagon, and the North Tower fell just as we started watching. Reports and pictures of the fire at the Pentagon and later of the crash near Shanksville, Pennsylvania followed. We watched and talked as the pieces were coming together—the timing of multiple hijackings, followed by crashes must have been the work of terrorists. It would take hours, days, and weeks to put the full story together—that it was the work of a group called Al Qaida, the identities and origins of the perpetrators, that they had used common box cutters, which had not been stopped by airport security, and that the fourth flight had possibly targeted the Capitol, but was thwarted by the passengers."

"We sensed that this was a transformative moment for America and our generation, but we did not yet understand the implications, except that America would no longer feel insulated from terrorism, which previously—domestic terrorists at Oklahoma City excepted—had largely taken place overseas. In the following days, I phoned a college friend whose office was in Tower Two. Thankfully, he answered the phone, not his wife. He had watched from his apartment in Jersey City as the plane struck his building,

and he felt the heat from the fireball clear across the Hudson. More stories filtered in. One of our fellow log canoe sailors was spared because he left his office at Cantor Fitzgerald to go across the street for a cup of coffee. My Talbot County cousin was widowed when her husband didn't make it out from his new job at the investment bank of Keefe, Bruyette & Woods; he left behind two daughters—an infant and a toddler. It seemed everyone I knew was connected to someone who was directly touched," he reflects.

Leshner concludes, "Locally, we attended vigils and special services, one at St. Luke's in St. Michaels, and we struggled to comprehend the magnitude of the loss. But it would take years for all of the consequences, the ways it changed us and American society, to fully unfold."

Council Member Frank Divilio, who was in college at the time, comments, "I was in the packed Commons at Salisbury University, with every television tuned to the news. Everyone was silent for what seemed like an eternity. My first thought was of my father who traveled extensively at the time. He emailed me that he was safe. Then I looked to a few of my closest friends, who were attending college after having served in the Armed Forces. I felt helpless."

He reflects, "I'm proud of how America stepped up to the plate and showed the world that we can rebuild, unify under the worst conditions, and move forward without ever forgetting. At the end of the day, I feel proud of our country. To this day, before every meeting, I get goosebumps when we say the Pledge of Allegiance, looking at our flag with pride."

To commemorate those who served and the lives lost on 9/11, Talbot County Government and the Town of Easton will host a ceremony on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, at 8:30 a.m. at the corner of West Street/Dover Street in Easton. Representatives of law enforcement, local clergy and the community at large will take part in the program. Music will be provided by the Easton Middle School Advanced Band and Easton High School Band. There will be a moment of silence and tolling of bells to mark the moment the Tower One fell, as well as an acknowledgment of those who placed their lives in peril for the service of others that day.

In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the Meeting Room, Talbot County Free Library—Easton. For further information, contact Susan Moran, Talbot County Government at 410-770-8010.